

Destination

Whenever I leave home,
I choke on the aftertaste of shortbread
and tear my clothes in an open field;

I drift in the dust of country stores
and make grass rise out of my cheek. It's better
when I return a cub to its den. It's better

when the sky is mauve blankets.
It's better that the bush isn't consumed.
It's better when I write autobiography.

My mind is the late Sabbath candle.
My temple burns with reasons to exist.
A cup of water is just within reach. I put

my hand to the plow in a field of wheat.
I weep at the color green. I taste
salt in lemon cake. I offer myself

to the ancient texts, words strong
as leviathan and robe,
words full of hammers and lamps. As soon

as they are spoken, an angel flies
with the sound of a trumpet; I will study
that air a little; I will not agitate it. I am a child

of eternal mirrors. I was born in a seal;
I breathe because of fervor, because
of the watchmen's grace; I forget

creation has not ended. I seek for
the condition of the hat's shelter, the mime's
speaking shadow. I harvest olives and grapes.

I confess *noonday* in the Book of Mormon:
it is Joseph's front door, it is a vial of oil, one
of the psalms in a dead man's quiver, one child
poking through the straw and leaves.
On the eve of new knowledge, on the eve
of an open shrift, I cook husks primed

for a sheep's belly, I gurgle a cup of brack
from the Great Salt Lake; I recall that home
will diminish the moon, candles will die

in the bushel, fields will reap the dusk's glaze.
I stand with white cloth reading
Young and Smith. I look for a shortcut

to Temple Square. A stranger grabs
the back of my feet. I tell him of the sweet roll
in my stomach. I point to the vanilla

between my teeth. I say, *It's what I taste
before sleep; what I wake up to.* He says,
"It's the altar you can't forget."

—Mark Bennion